

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

March 19, 2008

The Honorable David Obey
Chairman
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services,
Education and Related Agencies
House Appropriations Committee
2358 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Obey:

As you begin work on the Fiscal Year 2009 Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education Appropriations bill, we urge you to reconsider funding for the Community-Based Abstinence Education (CBAE) program, and to devote those dollars to other, more effective programs. We thank you for granting the program no new increase in last year's final bill; that was an important first step.

As you know, more than \$1 billion has been spent on "abstinence-only" programs in the last decade and annual funding for these programs now stands at an all-time high of \$176 million. The CBAE account alone has grown from \$20 million appropriated in FY'01 to \$113 million appropriated this year.

However, numerous reports have found that the "abstinence-only" approach simply does not work. For example, in April 2007, the independent research firm Mathematica Policy Research, Inc. released a study – commissioned by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) – concluding that students in "abstinence-only" programs are no more likely to abstain from sex, delay initiation of sex, or have fewer sexual partners than students who did not participate. Moreover, 13 states have evaluated their federally funded "abstinence-only" programs and not a single one found positive, long-term impact. In fact, in some cases young people who participated in the programs actually increased their sexual activity. As a result of these and other evaluations, at least 15 states have rejected federal "abstinence-only" funding.

Not only do these programs not help our teens abstain from sex, many are rife with scientific inaccuracies, factual errors, and troubling biases that put our teens at greater risk for unintended pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases. A 2004 House Government Reform Committee report found that more than two-thirds of CBAE grantees used curricula that "contain false, misleading or distorted information about reproductive health," such as that condoms fail more often than they actually do, that sweat and tears can transmit HIV, and that women need "financial support" while men need "admiration." Furthermore, a 2006 Government Accountability Office (GAO) report found that HHS provides little oversight of federally funded "abstinence-only" programs in regard to medical accuracy. The GAO also found that, by censoring important health information about condoms, CBAE grantees do not comply with section 317P(c)(2) of the Public Health Services Act.

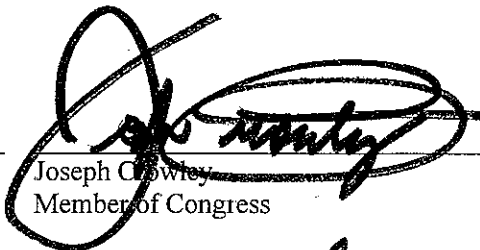
In addition, the nation's leading medical and public-health organizations – including the American Medical Association, the American Public Health Association, the American Academy of Pediatrics, and the Society for Adolescent Medicine – do not support the "abstinence-only" approach. The National Academy of Sciences' Institute of Medicine has even criticized the federal government's investment of hundreds of millions of dollars in the programs as "poor fiscal and public health policy." We could not agree more.

For all these reasons, we urge you to reconsider the appropriation for the CBAE program for FY'09. With your help, we made great progress in holding the funding line level last year. Now, as responsible stewards of taxpayer dollars, we must continue the effort and scale back our nation's investment in this ineffective program. Our teens – and our taxpaying constituents – deserve nothing less.

Sincerely,



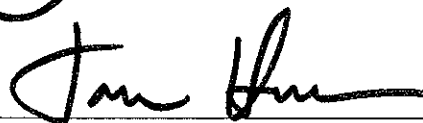
Lois Capps
Member of Congress



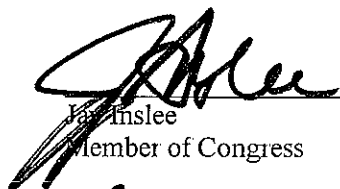
Joseph Crowley
Member of Congress



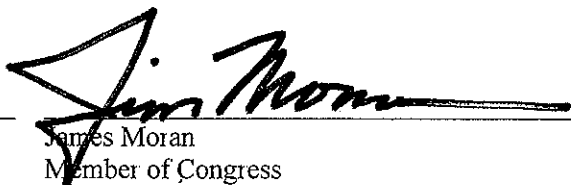
Diana DeGette
Member of Congress



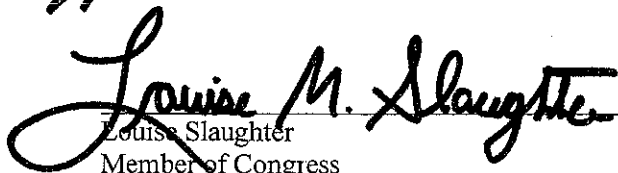
Jane Harman
Member of Congress



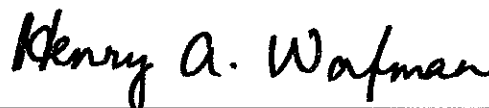
Pat Inslee
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James Moran
Member of Congress



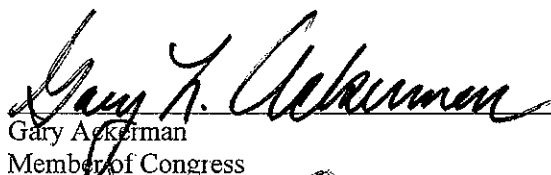
Louise Slaughter
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Henry Waxman
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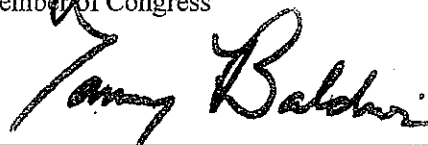
Neil Abernombie
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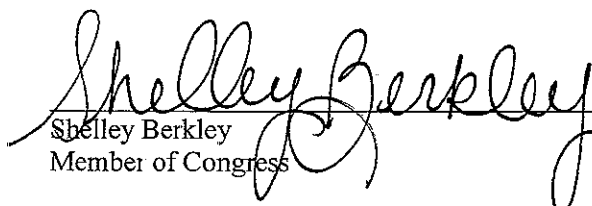
Gary Ackerman
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Thomas Allen
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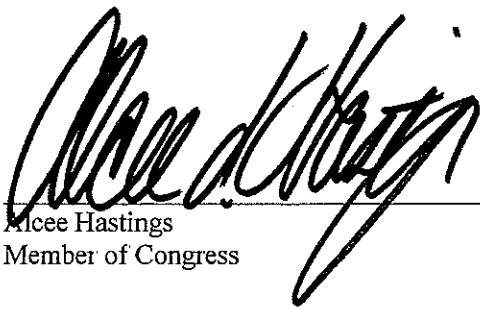
Tammy Baldwin
Member of Congress



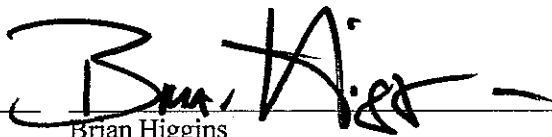
Shelley Berkley
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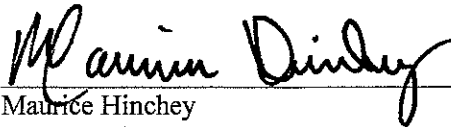
Howard Berman
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Alcee Hastings
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Brian Higgins
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Maurice Hinchey
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Mazie Hirono
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Paul Hodes
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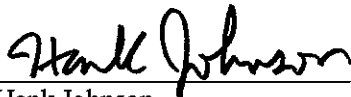
Eleanor Holmes Norton
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Rush Holt
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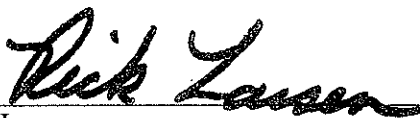
Sheila Jackson Lee
Member of Congress



Hank Johnson
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Dennis Kucinich
Member of Congress



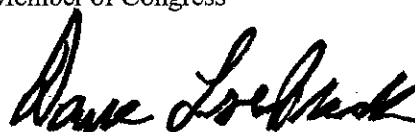
Rick Larsen
Member of Congress



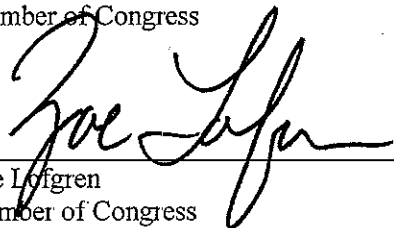
Barbara Lee
Member of Congress



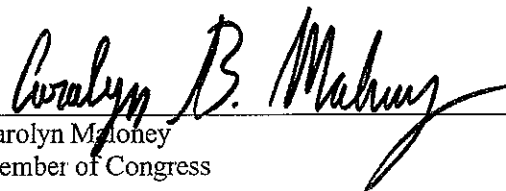
Sander Levin
Member of Congress



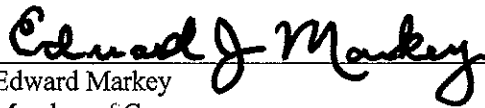
Dave Loebsack
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Zoe Lofgren
Member of Congress



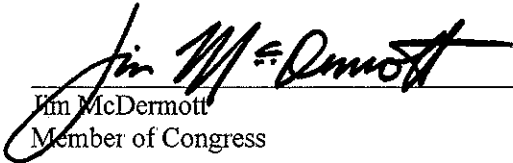
Carolyn Maloney
Member of Congress



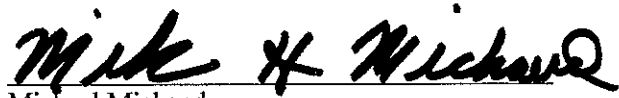
Edward Markey
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Doris Matsui
Member of Congress



Jim McDermott
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Michael Michaud
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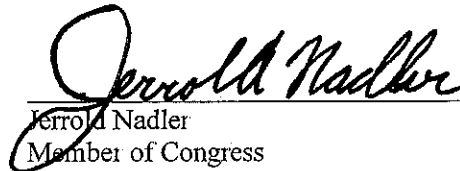
Brad Miller
Member of Congress



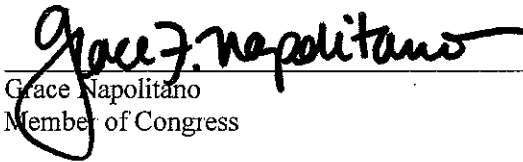
George Miller
Member of Congress



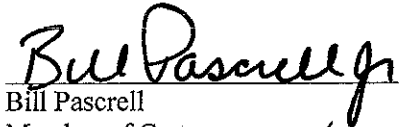
Gwen Moore
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Jerrold Nadler
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Grace Napolitano
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Bill Pascrell
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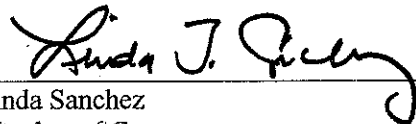
Donald Payne
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Charles Rangel
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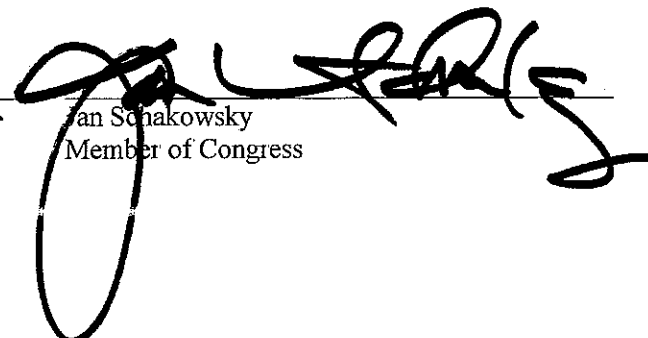
Bobby Rush
Member of Congress



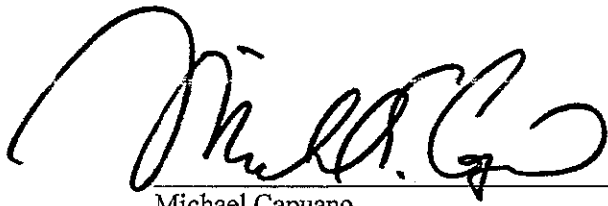
Linda Sanchez
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Loretta Sanchez
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Jan Schakowsky
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Michael Capuano
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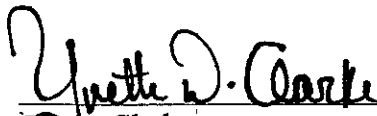
Russ Carnahan
Member of Congress



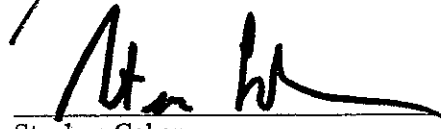
Kathy Castor
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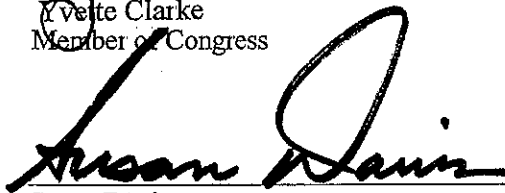
Donna Christensen
Member of Congress



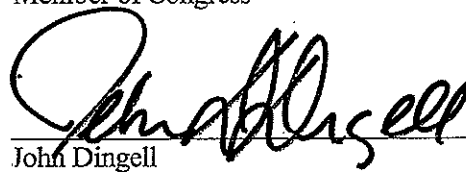
Yvette Clarke
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Stephen Cohen
Member of Congress



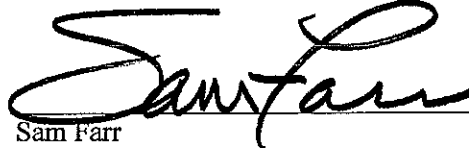
Susan Davis
Member of Congress



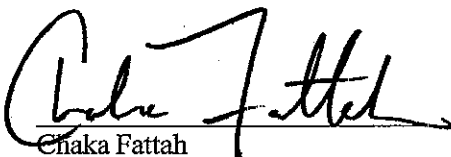
John Dingell
Member of Congress



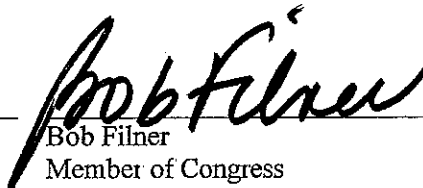
Keith Ellison
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Sam Farr
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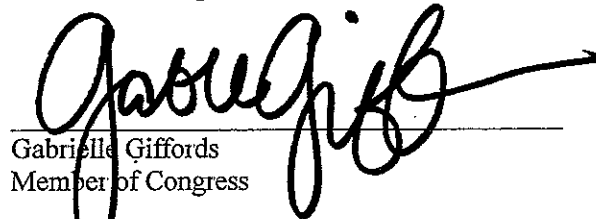
Chaka Fattah
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Bob Filner
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Barney Frank
Member of Congress



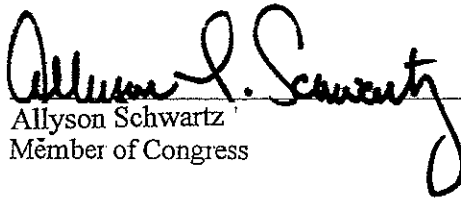
Gabrielle Giffords
Member of Congress



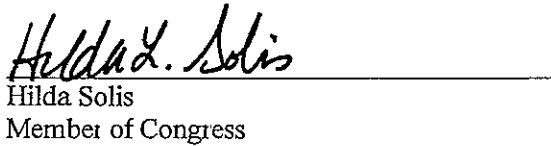
Gene Green
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Phil Hare
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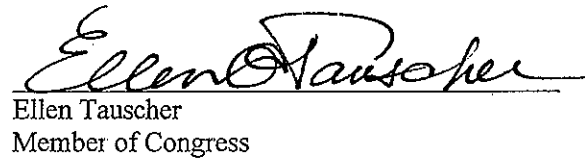

Allyson Schwartz
Member of Congress

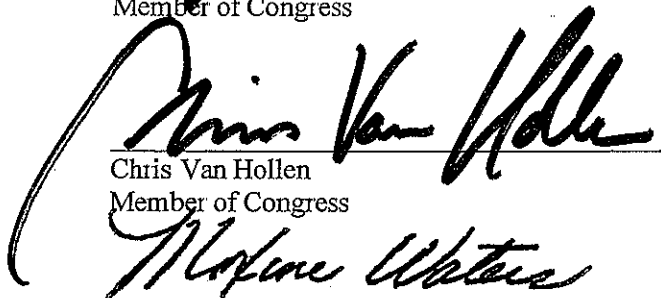

Christopher Shays
Member of Congress

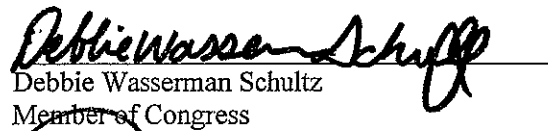

Hilda Solis
Member of Congress

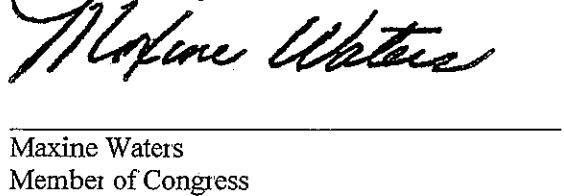

Fortney Pete Stark
Member of Congress

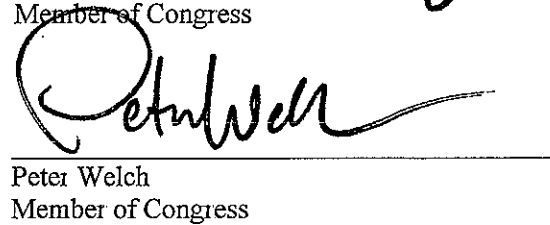

Betty Sutton
Member of Congress


Ellen Tauscher
Member of Congress

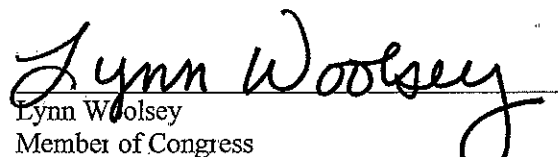

Chris Van Hollen
Member of Congress

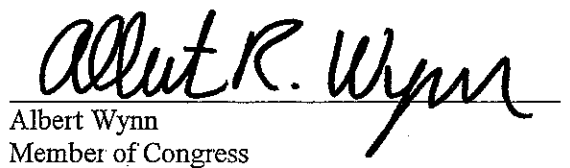

Debbie Wasserman Schultz
Member of Congress

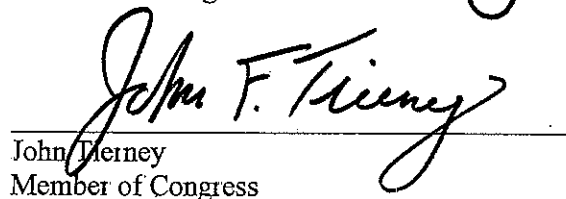

Maxine Waters
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Lynn Woolsey
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